

Accountability to God.49
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John 19-22

For it is written. As, I live, saith, the Lord.
every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue
shall confess to God,

So then every one of us shall give account
of himself to God.

Romans. XIV - 11-12

Brooklyn Nov 16. 1873

As the Deity has been, & still is, imagined as
generally a magnified individual - so the relation
between man & his maker - as set forth by
popular religions, are those existing between a
subject and his earthly prince. - God, it has been
said, is a projection of man's own nature. - -

It is as though men worshiped their shadows
in the clouds. - - Though no Theist can ~~concede~~^{concede}
that the idea of God is merely a creation of
the human mind - corresponding to no outward
reality. - Still it is apparent that the mind
has always dressed divinity in its own
colors. - As intelligence is commonly associated
with the human form. - ^{people} ~~men~~ very naturally
think of an intelligent creator under the same
form. - As their minds are combinations of
different notions, emotions, & desires - they
have supposed that there could be no mind
unless it were made up of thoughts &
feelings like their own. - In the effort

to make God appear real - men have
been led to form a picture of him in
their imaginations - and because the imagination
can only construct ^{out} of the materials which
observation has supplied - theology has ~~been~~
necessarily ^{been led into} ~~run~~ Anthropomorphism
more or less gross - God has been a great
King - differing from earthly potentates in
degree - rather than in kind - The only infinite
attribute really ascribed to him - has been
omnipotence - and ^{not so much by} ~~that only by~~ a negation
of any limit to his power - as the confessed
inability of the mind to fix any definite limit -

For the rest his attributes have been only
human traits - idealized and magnified -

Thus he is represented as having loved and
hated - praised and condemned - as rewarding
and punishing - assisting and avenging the
right & wrongs - of his subjects - precisely as a
perfect King - might be supposed to do -

If we may trust the thought of Jesus, ^{as he} ~~as~~ as St. John represents it. - He was not thus bound by his imagination. - The idea of God as embodied in the oft repeated saying - "He in me & I in Him" - cannot be that of the most righteous & powerful among individual spirits. Rather was the Father - to Jesus - a being not to be at all grasped by the imagination. - but to be perceived by the intellect - & felt by the affections. -

Yet from the ~~fact~~ ^{first} these first gospels - we discover that he often sought to express the methods of Providence under the figure of an Eastern Court. - Doubtless he was obliged to adopt such a method of illustration - in addressing the common people. - for they could not conceive of God without the aid of their imaginations. - Indeed the ~~fact~~ ^{truth} that Matthew, Mark, & Luke recorded ~~none~~ ^{any} of the philosophic sayings, peculiar to the fourth gospel. - shows that they were chiefly impressed by their under attempts at

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symbolizing the Deity. - -

Now I know not why an image of God formed in the mind - is not as truly an idol - as when that mental image - is hewn out of wood or stone. - I cannot see wherein this talk about God as a King - sitting upon a great white throne - differs from the eastern custom of poring the God Juggernaut - except in being a more refined species of idolatry.

Certainly in each method of representing God there is the same fatal defect. - that of making Him entirely exterior to man. - & failing to show any other than purely artificial relations between them. - This God who occupies a throne - cannot be in me, ^{nor} I in Him. -

We are forever apart. - A mediator becomes a necessity. - and the laws which God ordains for the government of the world - ^{as well as the} ~~are such~~ special cases brought before his tribunal for decision - are not determined by the righteous

perfection of His own nature - but by what this
mediator can extort from a despot - living
alone for his own pleasure and gratification -

What I particularly wish to call your
attention to - is the conception of an entirely
arbitrary Providence - which has grown up
under this habit of dressing the idea ^{of God} in human
limitations - which is indeed the necessary and
unavoidable consequence of that habit - -

The Moral law is simply the will of God;
and it is not permitted to ask why is it God's
will? - Of his own good pleasure - he has marked
out certain paths in which men should walk -
and He is pleased to grant happiness & life to those
who comply with his ordinances - But let those
who disobey - draw his anger - sooner or later
it will come upon them like a whirlwind -
and it cannot be predicted how complete the
disaster may prove - Then men ^{have} ~~may~~ walk
before the Almighty in such fear - as in feudal

days - removed the hearts of the serfs of some
 lawless Baron - They knew not what to expect
 from Him, - As in the one case there was
 no charter or Constitution - by which the noble
 was bound in dealing with his subjects, - ~~and not~~ ^{nor}
 trial accorded to one, against whom his master's
 wrath was kindled, ^{and} - the reigning power
 was equally dreaded by both innocent & guilty, -
 so in the other case, - everything being thought
 to depend upon the arbitrary will of God -
 and there being no conception of Universal
 laws, - by which he holds himself bound, - men
 know not at what moment his anger may
^{kindle} ~~kindle~~ against them, - nor ^{conceiving} ~~are they~~ free
 from dread of the direst calamities, - For
 under this conception - there ^{are} no fixed
 penalties for offences against heaven, - He
 who is conscious of guilt, - is not only ignorant
 of the time when punishment shall come
 but of what ^{the} ~~short~~ punishment shall be, -

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It may be loss of his own health. - it may be
the death of a friend. - it may be disaster in business -
or whatever of the thousand reverses in life - the
victim must dread; - but he knows not what
awaits in reprobation of the worst. -

all this results from the literal conception
of God as a great King. - to whom we are
only related through our dependency. - and
whose dealings with us - are not so much
controlled by our ~~own~~ deserts - as by his varying
mood. - To day he is angry, & smites the crowding
people with terrible plagues. to quit some
trifling offence. - Tomorrow he is compassionate
and winks at grievous wrongs. -

The whole condition of thought - & feeling
under such a suppositious government - is
illustrated by the Jewish treatment of disease. -

The Jew regarded sickness as a penalty
inflicted for some violation of the moral
law. - and this as it tended to turn his

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attention away from the physical cause of disease. - made disease more frequent and loathsome. - And on the other hand - as the lepers grew more numerous, - and cripples multiplied - ~~or~~ the people addressed themselves to more penitential observance of their situation, - and set their faces harder against those whom heaven's Justice had already stricken. - but by some little neglect of his requirements, - or by harboring their enemies - they too should provoke God's fury. - Thus their superstition - their fears & their plagues - all fed upon each other - & grew apace. - - Who did say, ask the Disciples - This man or his Parents that he was born blind. - And Jesus by referring the affliction to other causes than the transgression of the moral law, - gave evidence that however much he might descend to teach the people in high wrought pictures, - ^{he yet} knew the whole superstitious system to be false. -

Now I am not prepared to say that childish
 as this conception of Providence is - it has not
 been of value to the world! - for undoubtedly the
 idea that intelligence ^{could belong} belonged to an omnipresent
~~power~~ ^{spirit} - without form or shape, - or that ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ any
 intelligence past & future should alike exist
 in the eternal present - would be unintelligible
 to many of our own ^{day} ~~time~~ - The mind is so
 tyrannized over - by its conceptions of time &
 space, - it is no wonder that it surrounds God
 with the same limitations, - And better it is to
 worship such a ^{deity} ~~god~~ - than ~~none~~ at all.

Neither am I prepared to say - that the
 excessive dread of almighty power - which belongs
 to this condition of mind, has not been
 instrumental in holding the world to its
 conviction of duty. - But this I am
 prepared to say - that among intelligent
 people - the world over - this whole theory of
 our accountability to God - is now out of date. -

not even a modification of it will longer
 serve, - and we are actually driven to seek
 some new interpretation of these words, - "Every
 one of us shall give account of himself to God."

The Catholic Church - whether alarmed for
 its own safety - or moved by regard for public
 morals, - is taking advantage of the prevalence
 of crime & the unsettled state of the public mind -
 to urge with new zeal & previous arguments -
 a return to her authority, - - But however
 desirable such a return might be - it is now
 impossible, - Rome may ~~now~~ ^{now} ~~curse~~ ^{curse} until she
 is black in the face, - and the world cannot work
 itself into ^a ~~new~~ ^{newer}, - People have found that one
 can exist - & even enjoy life, - though every part
 of his body from the crown to the sole -
 has been given over categorically to eternal
 torment, - It is idle to talk that that church
 can ever again reinstate its theories, -

Equally idle is it to thunder out the

old fashioned notions of our responsibility to
 God; - to call, earthquakes, & fire - & plagues -
 Judgements of heaven upon sabbath breakers
 & blasphemers; - or to hold up the death of a
 friend as a warning to the afflicted family - to
 attend more faithfully to church ordinances; -
 all this is worse than idle - it is pernicious; -
 for it makes people think they can violate
 the moral law with impunity; - The curse of
 the Protestant is as powerless to excite terror
 as the curse of the Pope; - and the contempt
 of the people does not stop with those who thus
 affect to speak with voice of heaven - but
 extends to heaven itself; - Because after men
 have learned to refer their disasters to natural
 causes - rather than to a special act of the
 divine will - in retribution for offenses with
 which they are totally disconnected - the religious
 world must go on flourishing its stringless bow; -
 people are asking - what sort of a Providence

to this - which deals so largely in horizontal thrusts - & is so slow in the performance, -

It is all very fine to talk about Chicago's awful Judgement - but how about Boston? why should New York go unscathed? - A God who is represented as dealing with us after this fashion - very soon loses our respect -

So I say we are forced to seek some new idea of our responsibility to a higher power - and when all is said & done - we shall find that the sum of ^{that} ~~our~~ responsibility to be within us - nor less - than the necessity of ^{taking the natural} ~~abiding by the consequences~~ consequences of our own action. - We need within hope nor fear anything which is not a legitimate effect of the course which we set in motion. - ~~Whatever~~ ^{may be} that legitimate effect - we cannot hope to escape ^{it} - Anything more than that responsibility the facts of life will not show - and we woefully deceive ourselves

when we think to escape with anything less:-

On the one hand we have to learn that a sin against the moral law - is not as such punished by any deprivation of friends or estate:- and on the other, that it has its own appropriate penalty - which if not so easily seen, will be just as keenly felt:-

Then we to make the discovery - that God works through cause & effect - in the moral realm - as well as the physical:- and whatever they may thereby lose of superstitious terror - will be compensated for by the certainly of retribution:- I may not so much fear the penalty of my little offences - as did my ancestors:- but I shall never trust to some loophole of escape from that penalty:- -

Business success is one thing:- literary success is another:- physical health is still another:- & mental health - makes a fourth:- Each of these is a want admired by

fidelity to one particular class of laws - and
is lost by disobedience of those laws. - -

A man who abuses his physical nature
is not punished by bankruptcy, - but by gout;
why should we expect the violation of spiritual
laws to be followed by anything other than
spiritual disease? - - It is true that failure
in one sphere - often involves failure in
another. - The man who destroys his health - is
apt to so ruin his capacity for business - as
to involve commercial defeat, - ^{as well} - But
still there are certain laws of Trade - which
made use of by ~~the~~ a man of ^{the} requisite
ability, - will infallibly lead him to affluence
be he ~~not~~ saint or sinner, - The old Proverb
that honesty is the best policy is sometimes
understood to mean - that the honest man
is always on the high road to financial
prosperity, - ~~and that the scheming~~
~~and that the scheming~~ villain is
only ~~not~~ digging the grave for his own hopes, -

The facts of life however warrant no such Protest:-
But you say it ought to be so!- Not a bit of
it!- Why should honest inability hope to
outstrip unscrupulous cunning? - or expect a ^{that under}
a Just Providence to its virtue will be accounted with
for copiousity!- God's laws secure to the earnest
Kneer nothing, - as well as to the ~~honest~~ ^{man of sterling}
integrity, - a plentiful harvest - if he but
properly till the ground, - and if he be a better
farmer - he gets a better crop, - for all the other
virtue, - Now do not again ask - what
advantage then has the honest business man
over the scoundrel? - lest you betray by the question
that the popular maxim has led you to to
suppose, that man's tenderest feelings lie in
his purse, - If we live to get rich, - 'tis very
like we dread above all things, poverty, - and not
surprising that we come to think wealth
a sovereign balm for afflicted consciences, -

Thus if the end cannot sanctify the means, -

it is supposed that the end attained will
 confer such priceless benefits - as to atone for
 any ^{little} damage incurred to the soul, -- There
 lies the mistake, ~~and~~ in supposing that the
 Divine Justice is only vindicated - in taking
 away ill gotten gains, - or that such deprivation
 is the only punishment which the Ruler can
 fulfil. -- These so called Judgements, which
 are seen of men, - are really among the
 lightest ^{of all} penalties. ~~which~~ that our responsibility
 brings us under, -- What millionaire - broken
 in mind & body, - racked by ^{the} pains & oppressed
 by the mental gloom - which result from the
 physical sins of himself or his ancestors, -
 but would gladly exchange - every dollar
 he possesses - for the perfect health and
 buoyant spirit, of the ^{child} ~~boy~~ who clings upon
 his knee, - And by as much as the laws
 of physical health are more important to
 us than the principles of trade, - by so

much do the laws which govern the mind
~~and~~ spirit of man - recall all others - in their
 power to confer blessing or inflict misery. -

It is with our souls as with our bodies; -
 Their health depends upon the fulfillment of
 certain conditions. - and with the neglect of
 these comes some form of insanity. - All crime
 is insanity. - though whatever that plea may avail
 in earthly courts. - it by no means diffuses responsibility
 before the Tribunal of Heaven. - All mental
 gloom & despondency - are species of insanity. - All
 the tortures of remorse. - all conjuring up horrors
 out of shadows - give evidence of mental disease. -
 which arises from disobedience to some law
 of our being. - - This is just as certain, as that
 the science of Medicine. - so far as it discovers
 & applies these laws - has been able to restore
 in some measure the mental balance. -

Whether ignorantly or willfully. he who
 who violates or neglects these conditions upon

which the welfare of his soul depends - suffer
 in consequence from deranged - or enfeebled
 faculties, - and that is exactly - our responsibility
 to God. - But you ask - is there no punishment
 for moral guilt! - and ought not one to
 suffer more for wronging his neighbor, - than for
 wronging himself? - I answer that one can
only suffer from his own wrongs, - but that
 the laws of God make us accountable for
 our conduct toward our fellows, - by making
 it impossible for us to wrong another - without
 inflicting a deeper wrong upon ourselves. -

Of course - all this cannot be made to
 clearly appear - within the limits of a single
 discourse, - but I only seek to impress, that though
 the divine laws do not impose fine & imprisonment,
 they vindicate themselves ^{by} justless - but more
 awful penalties, - Let me give one
 reason, which, say put before us more clearly
 the chief importance of those laws which

governs the well being of the mind. - It is, that happiness depends more upon the state or condition of the soul - than upon our surroundings. -

Whoso has the capacity for enjoyment - which comes of a healthy mind. - will find something to give pleasure. - in any outward condition. -

Whoso lacks that capacity. - will extract pleasure from no outward condition. -

The appreciation eye sees beauty everywhere. - but the color blind, can find nothing of interest in the ~~choicest~~^{choicest} painting. - What should we say of the man who gave his eyes to purchase a museum of fine arts. - and yet in effect that is just what thousands are to day doing. -

~~They~~ To surround themselves with beautiful and enjoyable things they are sacrificing ~~their power~~^{their faculties} of the mind - which can alone enable them to take delight, in any surroundings. -

They are selling their souls to gain the world. - & what shall it profit them? -

and must not we all plead guilty - to like
if not so conspicuous foolishness. - ~~There~~

There are a code of laws governing the
mind. - holding us all to rigid account. day
after day. - and we not only know next to
nothing about them. - but make no effort
at discovering. - We content ourselves with
the moral law as it was written thousands of
years ago. - trusting almost entirely in that
for the ^{proper} development of our higher natures. -
when we know that this was only a little
beginning upon the domain of spiritual law. -
under which we live - & by which we must
be judged. - - We institute long & tedious
research - to discover how the stars are held
in their places. - upon what forms all organized
life is based. - and this is well! - We study
the principles of political economy - that we
may know - why for what purposes governments
exist - & how those purposes may be advanced.

we familiarize ourselves with business rules
 & customs, - that we may attain the means of
 gratifying our higher tastes; - And yet when
 all this is done - the world does not seem to be
 much better or happier, - True ourselves are
 discontented - dissatisfied - and disappointed with
 life. - What is the difficulty? - Why - in all this
 we have been but studying & improving our
 surroundings, - forgetting that we ourselves need
 studying and improving. - How many a life
 ends in the sad discovery, - that just when one
 thinks ~~they~~^{he} can begin to enjoy it, - he must
~~commence~~^{begin} at the beginning once more & learn how
 to enjoy it. - Let us learn first, that accountability
 to God is the same for both soul & body. -
 & is expressed in the logical & necessary relation
 between cause & effect. - ~~Knowing~~^{Realizing} that, we
 shall know that spiritual health is the
 basis of all satisfactory success, - and that
 no success whatever - can compensate for the

loss & suffering brought upon us by
spiritual debility or disease. --

And now again I recur to the general
statement. - that our responsibility to God,
is, that under his Providence - we must take
^{note of} the consequences of our own acts. - - I
am accountable to him in that his laws -
hold sway over my whole life. - and reward
or punish - every thought - - every motion
every desire - & every deed. - by making each
a cause. - to work out effects after its own
nature. - This is a responsibility, which
is in no wise affected by a decision one way
or the other of the long mooted question between
fate & free-will. - How! it has been said. deny
the freedom of the will? then man is not a
responsi^{ble}~~ble~~ being. - There can be no such
thing as guilt. - & virtue is an empty name.
if ^{man} ~~he~~ is only a puppet - to be pulled
hither & thither by unseen wires. - as fate or

chance or Providence may direct. - But with all due respect to the great authorities whence their arguments come, - Man is equally responsible in either case, - as whether or no there is some power behind him - ^{governing} ~~deciding~~ his will. - the fact remains that after his will is decided and records itself in deed, - he - & no other in his place must take the consequences, - Just or unjust we know ^{this} to be true, - and if we cannot make our Theology consistent with the fact, - then so much the worse for our Theology. -

But I think I can see - & hope to be able to help others to see - that in this rigid accountability to which we are held, - lies the crowning evidence of not simply a just - but a Merciful Providence. -

I know the many objections which may be made to the position I have taken, - I know that at first - these laws seem to banish God, - & how the mind revolts from seeing these cold unfeeling laws of nature - usurp